

County, they found the "Big Woods" moniker to be an apt description of the territory—a place covered with elm, basswood, sugar maple, ash and red oak. The county grew steadily, but travel was difficult because people could only clear a few acres of trees a year. The construction of the railroad had the biggest impact on the county, as farmers could get their goods to market faster and people could move with greater ease. Today, the county has a population of over 100,000 and is one of the fastest growing areas in the state of Minnesota.

Eventually, the Big Woods region came to be called Wright County in honor of Silas Wright, a former Congressman, Senator and Governor from New York State. Buffalo was established as the county seat in 1873. Most of Wright County's early residents were involved in agriculture, and appreciation for the county's vast natural resources carries on today. There are nearly 2800 acres of land devoted to the nearly 30 county parks. Residents also make use of the 298 lakes within the borders of Wright County, swimming and boating in the summer and ice fishing in the winter.

Mr. Speaker, as a proud resident of Wright County, I am pleased to honor a place so rich in Minnesota history and culture on the occasion of its 150th birthday.

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TO COMMEMORATE THE ISSUANCE  
OF THE MARIAN ANDERSON  
STAMP

**HON. DANNY K. DAVIS**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 15, 2005*

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor one of America's most shining and influential artists, Ms. Marian Anderson. The recent issuance of a commemorative stamp in her honor provides an opportunity to recognize her impressive achievements.

Few musicians in history can claim the number of achievements Ms. Anderson can. As an opera singer, she proved to be among the world's best. Her range and ability to communicate a song's emotion were envied. Ms. Anderson often sang in the original language of the songs she performed, feeling that she would better connect with the native audience. By the end of her career she had performed in eight languages and traveled all over the world—living and studying for extended periods of time in Europe. Her voice graced President and Mrs. Roosevelt at the White House and the Inaugural ceremonies for Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. After hearing her, the world renowned conductor Arturo Toscanini commented that hers "... is a voice one hears once in a hundred years." How true.

During her life, Ms. Anderson witnessed and contributed to some of the greatest changes in history. She lived through two world wars, a depression, and the civil rights movement. As an African-American, female performer during a period of history in which that combination provided particular challenges, she overcame prejudice and social limitations. For example, she was the first black singer to perform on stage at the New York Metropolitan Opera

House. One of her most notable concerts was on Easter morning on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Broadcast nationwide via radio, Ms. Anderson sang before a crowd of over 75,000 and millions of listeners after she was prohibited from performing at Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the Revolution.

In addition to receiving awards for her musical talent, like the Grammy Lifetime Achievement, she received numerous other honors for her commitment to peace and equality. She was appointed goodwill ambassador to Asia and a delegate to the United Nations. She received the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award, the United Nations Peace Prize, the NAACP's Spingarn Medal for outstanding achievement by a black American, and the President's Medal of Freedom.

Clearly, Marian Anderson had a resonating and inspiring voice with the heart and conviction to match. Ms. Anderson's voice was a vehicle of communication, and music her universal language. Hers' represented the voice of so many others who were unable to speak out against the injustices they faced.

I am honored to celebrate the issuance of the Marian Anderson commemorative stamp today. Ms. Anderson is quite deserving of this recognition. In doing this we eternalize the courage, conviction, and talent of this remarkable woman.

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THE PASSING OF JON DRAGAN

**HON. NICK J. RAHALL II**

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 15, 2005*

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, it is with deep regret that I announce the loss of a true pioneer of whitewater rafting in southern West Virginia. Jon Dragan, dubbed the "Father of Whitewater Rafting," passed away on Saturday at the young age of 62.

Jon came to Fayette County West Virginia in 1964 to explore our wonderful rivers, the New and the Gauley. By 1968 he had opened the first commercial whitewater rafting company on the New River and the rest is history.

It was my great pleasure to work with him in my early years as a Congressman to establish the New River Gorge as a National River and part of the National Park system in 1978. His efforts in the process were instrumental and the end result has been a lasting wonder for southern West Virginia.

Throughout his career he continued to take part in exciting whitewater adventures, all while finding time to help out the community. He was a true public servant to West Virginia, and he leaves behind many people who were glad to know him, many fond memories and a great whitewater rafting industry.

Whitewater rafting is a huge part of the economy in southern West Virginia. It is one of the many wild, wonderful things that bring tourists to West Virginia and the entire industry was started by Mr. Dragan. We owe a great debt to him for all of his hard work and he will forever be remembered in Fayette County and across Southern West Virginia.

TRIBUTE TO MR. JERRY WARTGOW

**HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO**

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 15, 2005*

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable individual and a personal friend. Mr. Jerry Wartgow recently announced that he will be stepping down this summer as the Superintendent of Denver Public Schools. He will be sorely missed by all who had the pleasure of working with him in his tireless efforts to improve the quality of education and the lives of Denver area youth.

Jerry is a wonderful man who is truly dedicated to education reform. In his four-plus years as superintendent he relentlessly pursued reforms, a pursuit that sometimes put him at odds with the educational establishment and at loggerheads with state and municipal officials.

Mr. Wartgow's dedication to institutional reform and improving results was matched only by his compassion for the children he worked for every day. Jerry was a believer in the notion of education as a lifetime process. He believed that in order to get long term results in childhood achievement, education has to start early—and he brought that thought process to the superintendent's office.

As he told the Rocky Mountain News last week, "Economically, the best possible investment is to put money in early childhood education and kindergarten. There's no question about it. That's the best way to go about secondary school reform—to start early."

Jerry recently also told The Rocky Mountain News that, "Successful leaders have always been able to resist the pressure to make short-term, quick-fix changes at the expense of sustainable reform."

Mr. Speaker, without a doubt Jerry has shown himself to be one of those successful leaders.

Rocky Mountain News columnist Mike Littwin recently penned a column about Wartgow that I think did a fine job capturing the kind of man Jerry is, and I would like to submit it here for the RECORD.

When Jerry Wartgow leaves his job as DPS superintendent in June, he'll leave the job undone.

Which is, of course, the only way you can leave that job.

Wartgow will have kept the position for just over four years. In explaining why he's leaving, he notes that the typical urban superintendent lasts only 27 months.

That's not really an explanation—and he didn't offer a better one—but it is a great statistic.

In 27 months as a school superintendent, it's easy to either wear out or to wear out your welcome. Or both.

When Wartgow made his announcement at the Denver School of the Arts in a speech before school principals and staff, he got a standing ovation. That's the way you want to go—before the grumbling gets too loud.

And there is some grumbling, of course: about struggling high schools, about high dropout rates, about potential labor problems, about community schools that are not always accepted by their communities.

In his speech, Wartgow pointed to his accomplishments—one form of education reform following another; money raised, even